

Kids Really Learn When You Make Learning Real

It's twenty years ago. Myron Blosser, a proud, young, idealistic teacher, has just wrapped up a unit on molecules and atoms with his eighth graders. Then a hand goes up. "Mr. Blosser," a student asks sincerely, "are there any atoms in this room?" Stunned, Myron asks himself, "Where did I lose these kids?" Fast-forward to summer 2003. Myron and 22 students have gathered on the banks of the Columbia River to talk with hydropower officials, environmentalists, Native Americans, and politicians about water issues. The class is retracing the trail of Lewis and Clark. They're considering diverse opinions, compiling real data, creating labs in their tents, drawing maps, publishing articles in USA Today, changing their world views, growing up . . . In a word, they're learning - really learning - and having the time of their lives. Each summer since 1998, Myron has led students on similar hands-on learning adventures. Each itinerary has relied heavily on National Park programs, staff, and volunteers to help inspire and guide his students. Each journey has confirmed the same core lesson taught in Parks every day: **make it real and kids really learn**. As one formerly passive student told Myron when the class returned home, "Now I know why I need to go to school. There's so much to learn. I need to get busy..." Don't we all?



TRANSFORMING EDUCATION

NOURISHMENT FOR TOMORROW'S LEADERS

The transformation of Myron Blosser's teaching and his students' learning came in large part through their experiences in the classrooms that are America's National Parks. But you don't have to go to the other side of the continent to discover them. Hundreds of Parks are just an easy field trip away from thousands of American classrooms.

Unfortunately, not enough kids or teachers even know these opportunities exist. We have this tremendous, shared resource for learning and yet, of the 70 million school children in America, only 1.6 million visit a National Park each year for a curriculum based program. Opportunities for active learning are more important than ever, and the possibilities for learning when National Parks are part of the equation are endless.

Extraordinary real-world learning about the environment and the American experience have sustained National Park Education Programs since the very beginning. The National Park Foundation works to support dynamic new National Park education programs, innovative teaching methods and techniques, and cutting-edge technology - and we are ready to "get busy". **It will take sustained investment to put these innovations into action.** Specifically, we need to fund programs that:

- Promote Park education opportunities to educators at all levels.
- Match Park learning experiences with curriculum goals for state and local schools.
- Equip teachers with skills and knowledge to better understand what National Parks offer and how best to use them.
- Put innovative teaching techniques to work in Parks.
- Reach out to students who can't visit Parks with cutting-edge distance learning technology, traveling exhibits, and educational kits.
- Raise the overall quality and consistency of learning in Parks by coordinating resources, expertise, and innovations from

NPF AT WORK: EDUCATION GRANT PROGRAMS

Parks as Resources for Knowledge in Science (PARKS) transforms National Parks into dynamic classrooms for teaching and learning science. The program provides professional development and funding to Parks and their local education partners to create programs based on the National Science Education Standards . . . **National Parks Labs** partner Parks and local high schools to provide hands-on, real-world science learning for students and their teachers. At present, the Labs support five national model projects.

"I felt like a scientist today . . . I've never done this before, and we had all this equipment that I never used before."

- Student participating in Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area's PARKS program